



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

December 15, 2003

**FORMER FEDERAL OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY TO
ASSISTING ILLEGAL ALIENS AND DOCUMENT FRAUD**

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez announced today that former Senior U.S. Immigration Inspector HECTOR AYBAR-MENDEZ, age 45, of Kissimmee pleaded guilty to charges that he conspired to violate the immigration and social security laws of the United States and he committed other immigration-related violations. AYBAR-MENDEZ was assigned to the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, part of the recently formed United States Department of Homeland Security, and formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the United States Department of Justice. AYBAR-MENDEZ pleaded guilty on December 12, 2003, before U.S. Magistrate Judge David A. Baker in Orlando federal court. He faces a maximum sentence of ten years' imprisonment. A sentencing date has not yet been scheduled.

In the plea agreement, AYBAR-MENDEZ admitted that, while employed as a Senior Immigration Inspector with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, he forged, altered and falsely made immigration documentation and admission stamps in the passports of his paramour, her children and her niece, all Colombian citizens who were unlawfully residing

in the United States. AYBAR-MENDEZ admitted that he aided and abetted those illegal aliens in the unlawful acquisition of social security cards by using the false identification documents supplied by AYBAR-MENDEZ. The plea agreement also states that he provided the illegal aliens with altered and falsely made immigration documentation, and he harbored and shielded them from detection and apprehension within the United States. On September 17, 2003, law enforcement agents arrested Aybar-Mendez at his home. At the same time, they executed a search warrant at the residence. Agents located two machine-guns inside Aybar's residence.

This investigation was conducted by the United States Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Domestic Security Task Force. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey S. Downing.

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